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The Boyne Valley

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ANTIQUITIES
AT
ROYAL TARA
OLD MELLIFONT
DOWTH
NEWGRANGE
MONASTERBOICE

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THE BOYNE VALLEY

BY

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INTRODUCTION

The Boyne Valley, covering an area adjoining the banks of the river Mattock is, perhaps, the greatest source of historic interest in Ireland. Here, the relics of both pagan and Christian Ireland are closely linked and stretch over a period of some 4,000 years.

The dark days of paganism were marked by a culture and civilisation which, if not more advanced, was at least comparable with that of other countries. Significant, indeed, was the manner in which the era of Christianity began to convert the Irish people to new beliefs.

In the heart of paganism, within a few miles of Tara, St. Patrick began his work. This work, however, brought about the decay of Tara ; its great festivities and cultural activities gradually came to an end. Midway through the first millennium of Christianity, monasteries were established and saintly monks worked unceasingly to spread the Faith.

The growth of Christianity was marked by troubled times when the monks were forced to go into hiding. For this purpose, as well as other uses, round towers were built to provide protection. Also prominent amongst the relics of early Christianity are several High Crosses of Celtic design, embellished with Biblical scenes.

The Boyne Valley, rich in antiquities and monastic ruins encompasses the Hill of Tara, Dowth, Newgrange, Monasterboice and Old Mellifont. The following pages contain a short history of of these places, compiled from various reliable sources.

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An aerial view of the Hill of Tara

ROYAL TARA

WHERE 142 KINGS REIGNED

FEW royal residences can boast a history like that which made Tara famous throughout Europe and caused it to be recognised as the cultural and political capital of Ireland. Dating back to about 4,000 B.C. it is believed to have been the centre from which one hundred and forty-two Kings reigned.

It was at Tara that the Lia Fail, the Stone of Destiny and talisman of the Gael, was enshrined. So too it was from Royal Tara that the funeral processions of the dead Kings began their journey to the burial grounds on the banks of the river Boyne.

Tara Hill, situated some five hundred feet above the rich pasture lands of Co. Meath, commands an overall view of the surrounding countryside and it is said that at least eleven important landmarks were visible from its summit.

Historians of various ages told many stories of the festivals and other activities for which Tara was famous throughout Europe. But, with the passing of the centuries most of these legends, which were not committed to paper, have been lost for all time.

It is known, however, that every third year an assembly was held there at which the laws and customs of the land were discussed and instituted. Chieftains from all parts of the country attended and all resolutions passed were duly recorded in the Roll of Kings before becoming law.

GREAT HARVEST FESTIVAL

But it was for the great harvest Feis or Festival, which marked the Feast of Samhain, that Tara became renowned.

Nowhere in the western world at that period was there to be found anything to equal the gaiety and splendour of royal Tara.

The six-day festival was the event of the year and the days preceeding its opening saw the five chariot roads, which led to Tara from all parts of Ireland, thronged with people coming to participate. Even before Imperial Rome, Athens or Troy became recognised as cultural cities, Ireland had its own civilisation.

Both rich and poor were welcomed to the royal Palace. Its twelve magnificent portals were thrown open to admit princes, poets, athletes, bards and druids with their flowing beards. Jugglers and trick-o-the-loop performers were also present to provide amusement with their peculiar talents.

Music played an important part in the festivities. It was from the name Teamhair—house of music—that Tara took its name. So it is not surprising that musicians from all parts of the country were to be found in attendance at the Feis.

At sunset each evening the guests adjourned to the huge banquet hall—one of the most magnificent buildings in Europe. Capable of holding one thousand people at a sitting, it was 700 feet long and 90 feet wide. The most elaborate dishes were prepared and roast goose, mallard, pheasant, venison, oxen and boars were served.

Hundreds of servants tended the needs of those present, both in the banquet hall and the palace which was sub-divided to cater for the guests and was allocated for the use of those of a particular degree of profession, trade or rank.

The coming of Christianity to Europe began a new era for the western world. It was only a matter of time until missionaries would come to convert Ireland to Christianity. But four centuries passed before this was to come about.

During this period, an important part in the development of Tara was played by Cormac Mac Art who reigned in the third century A.D. In the course of his forty years Kingship he established schools of literature, metal-work and military training.

However, his work came to an abrupt end when he received face wounds during a skirmish. Lest he should become the victim of a spell, which forbade anyone physically blemished from ruling, he retired and gave control to his son Cairbre.

DECLINE AND FALL

Cormac died at the age of ninety the victim of a druid's evil wish. He was choked by a salmon bone because he had reasoned that there was a God and was bold enough to proclaim that soon Ireland would come to know of His existence.

Little more than a century passed before his claim became a reality. For, in 433, St. Patrick's historic meeting with the High King Laoghaire took place. The Paschal fire spread quickly throughout the land and the glory of Tara began to diminish.

Christianity spread and with the death of Diarmuid Mac Cearbhall in the mid-sixth century the Tara Feis came to an end. Gradually the Hill became abandoned and the buildings began to crumble into ruin.

The title, King of Tara, would no longer be given to kings throughout the land and a monk's prophecy "The city of Tara shall first be inhabited many hundred years, and thereafter remain without a dweller" came true.

There is a legend that Tara became deserted because it's King had been cursed for slaying an outlaw who had been refused sanctuary. It's doom is said to have been foretold by St. Ruadhan, a sixth century Abbot and Bishop whose anger was roused because the High King, Diarmuid, had violated the law of sanctuary and put to death a robber who claimed Church protection.

THE STONE OF DESTINY

The Lia Fail, Stone of Destiny, though somewhat insignificant in appearance, is of historic importance. It is thought to have

been erected at Tara about one thousand years ago but there is little evidence to confirm the accuracy of this belief.

According to tradition this stone was the original Jacob's Pillar which was brought to Ireland by the Milesians. Early bardic accounts claim that at the inauguration of a true High King the Lia Fail gave three mighty roars. It is perhaps, significant, that a true Irish King was always of Milesian stock.

Today, little evidence remains to bear witness to the various buildings which played such an important part in the history of Tara. A triple earth mound marks the Fort of Synods, once a place of great importance where St. Patrick, St. Adamnan and St. Ruadhan presided some fifteen centuries ago.

So too, the Fort of Kings, Grainne's Fort and King Laoghaire's Fort, are little more than names. But, the Hill of Tara has remained famous and the decades that lie ahead will continue to add to its glory as one of the greatest places of historic interest in Ireland.

OLD MELLIFONT

WHERE MONKS ONCE TROD

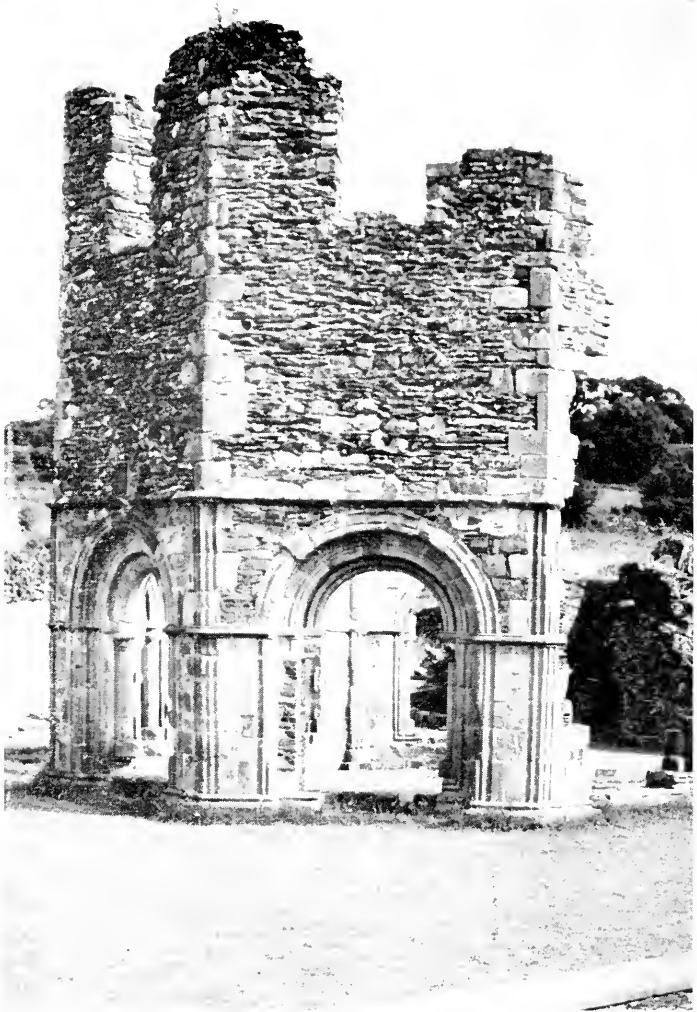
During the eleventh century Ireland was in a state of chaos and a dark age existed in which barbarism reigned. The native Monasticism was suppressed to such an extent that it never again rose to its original splendour. But throughout this period of suppression the Irish people held fast to their insular traditions, for they realised that the Monastic way was the right way.

In the early twelfth century a reform of the barbaric customs started and was well under way by the middle of the century. Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh, was the prelate who crowned the work. As well as being a man of ideas and ambitions, he was a close friend of the great St. Bernard, Abbot of the Cistercian Monastery at Citeaux, France.

On a piece of land on the banks of the river Mattock a few miles from Monasterboice donated to him by King Donnchad O'Cearbhaill, he set about establishing the first Cistercian house in Ireland, in the year 1142. The small community consisted of four Irish and nine French monks who had been sent by St. Bernard at Malachy's request.

The foundation was called Mellifont, meaning Honey Fountain. The Abbey, which took fifteen years to build, was magnificent in design and nothing of its beauty had previously been seen in Ireland. Its Solemn Consecration in 1157 was an event of national importance and was attended by the Papal Legate, High King, Murtough O'Loughlin, Bishops and Noblemen.

This great event met with wide support and showed clearly the Irish people's love for the Monastic system. Many gifts of



The Lavabo at old Mellifont

gold, including a chalice for the High Altar, and costly furnishings for the nine Altars were donated, together with a portion of land and some cattle.

SURVIVED MANY ATTACKS

Along with many other religious houses, Mellifont was suppressed by Henry VIII in the year 1539. The Abbot and community of about one hundred and fifty were driven from the monastery which was leased to Sir Gerald Moore, the Earl of Drogheda, who took up residence there.

It provided an excellent residence and place of defence against attacks from Irish rebels. It survived many such onslaughts, especially during the Rebellion of 1641; the siege of nearby Drogheda by Cromwellian troops in 1649 and again during the march of the Williamite army towards the Boyne in 1690.

Today, nothing but ruins remain to testify to the sad story of Mellifont's destruction by those who fought against Catholicism. As was the usual practice, the monks were their own architects and built to the uniform plan, common to all Cistercian Abbeys, so it is comparatively easy to visualise the appearance of the original buildings.

The ancient Gateway, which comprised the main entrance to the Abbey enclosure, was a massive tower, square and stern, with an elevated turret at its north east angle. On either side was a range of buildings which included the hospice and infirmary, also the house for travellers and stables for their horses.

Within the enclosure lies a rather confused mass of ruins, arches, walls and columns. In general outline they form a quadrangle. The Church, which was cruciform, occupied the north side of the quadrangle and is now unrecognisable except for the bases of the columns.

It consisted of a nave with aisles, 120 ft. by 54 ft., a chancel and transepts. At the intersection of the transept and nave was

the lantern, above which rose the bell tower. The entire nave was paved with beautiful red and blue tiles made by the monks. Some were inscribed with the words 'Ave Maria' while others were decorated with the fleur-de-lis emblem.

In the chancel, which measured some 42 ft. by 26 ft., is the remains of the basis of the High Altar. On the Epistle side are the piscina and the remains of the sedilia, or seats, used by the ministers of the Mass. On the Gospel side is an arched recess with ornamental moulding which is thought to form the tomb of King Donnchad O Cearbhaill.

The Church, although not very large, was a magnificent piece of architecture and formed a noble tribute to its builders. It underwent some alterations between the 13th and 15th centuries according to the advancing changes in the Gothic style. The destruction which reduced it to ruins remains an unwritten chapter in the history of Mellifont.

The Chapter house which adjoined the Church measured some 30 ft. by 19ft. and was considered to be one of the finest examples of Norman or early English style architecture in the country. It was probably the last building to be added to Mellifont and was noted for its ornate doorway which has been described as 'a perfect gem all of blue marble, richly ornamented and gilt.'

USED AS A PIG-STY

All that remains of this doorway is the foundation of the cluster of pillars. There is a story told that about the year 1755 the then owner of the Abbey gambled the door in a game of piquet. He lost and the winner had it transferred to his own residence where it was erected as a chimney piece.

At one time all the pillars and carved stonework of this beautiful building were painted in the most brilliant colours, the capitals in light blue and the pillars in red. During the occupancy of the Moore family the building was converted into a banquet-

ing hall, but was allowed to fall into disuse and it is recorded that in 1832 it was utilised as a pig-sty.

The monks of Mellifont were pioneers in the manufacture of bricks in Ireland and it is to their skill that the east window of the Chapter house is credited; it is considered that this window comprises the first piece of masonry in the country.

The true positions of the infirmary and the lectorium have never been definitely established. Likewise it is not known for certain where the Abbot's quarters or the library were situated. The former is thought to have been a large room above the Chapter house, but there are conflicting opinions.

Perhaps one of the clearest remains is that of the Abbey refectory, which runs from north to south and measured some 24 ft. by 60 ft. The pulpit, from which a monk read aloud during meal-times, is quite distinct and beyond dispute. The western wall had a turnstile through which food was passed from the adjoining kitchen.



General view of Old Mellifont

The Lavabo, the octagonal building situated opposite the refectory, once provided the washing place for the monks when they returned from their day's labour in the monastery fields. It was equipped with a series of water jets and basins and its arched structure was distinctive as can be seen from the remaining portion.

Its arches were carved from sandstone and rose to a height of about 30 ft., surmounting foliage ornamented capitals. Between the arches remain fluted pilasters crowned by capitals from which the groinings of semi-circular arches for the ceiling spring. The walls appear to have been painted blue and red.

Many other ruins add to the glory of Old Mellifont and several low crypts are still accessible. The river Mattock flows by within a few yards of what was once the monastery cemetery—a peaceful and serene setting for such a magnificent establishment.

DESERTED BY NEW OWNER

More than two centuries have passed since Old Mellifont became deserted and its buildings began to crumble into ruins. In the year 1727 the Moore family sold the property and moved to live at Monasterevan, Co. Kildare. The new owner, a Mr. Balfour of Townley Hall, decided not to take up residence at Mellifont which thereafter became deserted.

On a nearby hill overlooking Old Mellifont stand the ruins of a Church building closely associated with the Abbey. It was a structure of the fourteenth or fifteenth century and it was served by the monks for the benefit of the tenants and dependents of the Abbey. After the suppression in 1542 it was used as a Protestant place of worship.

In front of the building stood two plain and very ancient crosses, one with a heart encircled by a crown of thorns engraved upon it ; the other bears the fleur-de-lis on the arm. The latter cross has disappeared but the former lies on the ground in the portion of the cemetery on the south side of the roadway.

DOWTH AND NEWGRANGE

WHERE ROYALTY WERE BURIED

During the period 2,500 to 350 B.C., known as the Bronze Age, many burial places called 'chambered tumuli' for royal personages were built throughout Ireland as well as many parts of Europe. It is at Dowth and Newgrange that two of the best preserved mausoleums are to be found.

These burial places are comprised of cairns or piles of stones which form mounds without the use of any form of mortar, the entire interior being built up with large overlapping stones. An entrance passage led to the place of burial and tomb chamber where religious rites were held.

Despite the simplicity of their design, the soundness of each structure has been proved by the fact that after a lapse of many centuries they are still in a good state of preservation. Ancient writers have made reference to the Boyne Valley cairns and one of the works relating to Dowth and Newgrange contains the verses :

*“ The three cemeteries of the idolaters are
The cemetery of Taillten the select,
The ever-clean cemetery of Cruchan
And the cemetery of Brugh.*

*The host of great Meath were buried
In the middle of the lordly Brugh ;
The great Ultonians used to bury
At Taillten with pomp.”*

It is thought that these burial places were also frequented to mark ceremonial and festive occasions. With the exception of attacks by Danish plunderers about the year 860 A.D. there seems to have been little interference to the burial places, the entrances to which were sealed either with boulders or heaps of stones.

DOWTH—WHERE ROYALTY WERE BURIED

At Dowth the cairn is 47 ft. high, has a diameter of 280 ft. and a kerb of large stones. A passage off it's main entrance leads to two small cells of bee-hive shape construction and it has a number of smaller burial chambers in addition to the central one.

One of these bears a spiral pattern and fern-leaf. Another is decorated with a cross and circles while a third has concentric circles. The fourth shows a cross in double circles, also a rayed figure. All of these symbols are thought to have been used as a means of expressing some religious idea and were not carved for the purpose of ornamentation.

The two bee-hive cells form typical subterranean chambers but differ from the tumulus quite considerably in age. They are thought to be of Christian origin and it is most likely that they were, at some stage, connected with an ancient nearby church and may have been used as hiding places.

An investigation into the Dowth burial chamber was undertaken by the Antiquities Committee of the Royal Irish Academy in 1847 under the direction of a county engineer. In the centre of the cruciform chamber a sarcophagus was found, but it had been broken in several pieces. It was restored to it's original form and while clearing away rubbish from the chamber a number of burned animal bones were found.

Despite the passing of the years there has been comparatively little alteration in this cairn. One of the stones in the gallery leading to the chamber did, some decades ago, threaten to obstruct the passage, whilst another stone had been forced from

its proper position, but both were re-installed by the custodians of the monument.

NEWGRANGE BURIAL MOUND

The burial cairn at Newgrange is generally considered to be one of the most wonderful in Europe. As in the case of the Dowth cairn it is not possible to say when it was constructed and but for an accidental discovery, made by roadbuilders about the year 1700, its entrance might have remained hidden for all time.

This cairn was once surrounded by a circle of enormous stones, some of which can still be seen, and it is believed that there was once a stone obelisk surmounting it some forty feet above ground level. The large blocks of stone which lead towards the



Exterior view of Newgrange burial mound.

burial chamber are believed to have been brought from the banks of the river Boyne as they show signs of having been worn by water.

The chamber is cruciform in design with the head and arms of the cross forming three recesses, composed of blocks of stone, and bearing many different symbols. On the floor of each recess there was found to be a large stone basin or sarcophagus, all of which are believed to have been used for cremations.

While there is no definite evidence to show whether bodies were burnt or buried intact, experts point out that cremation was common at other burial mounds. Newgrange was plundered by Danish raiders about the year 860 A.D. and it is considered likely that the urns containing the ashes of those cremated were removed or destroyed.

THREATENED WITH DESTRUCTION

Thomas Davis, in the course of his 'Literary and Historical Essays' tells how this place of antiquity was once threatened with destruction. He writes :

"It is a thing to be proud of, as proof of Ireland's antiquity, to be guarded as an illustration of her early creed and arts. It is one of a thousand muniments of our old nationality which a national government would keep safe.

What, then, will be the reader's surprise and anger to hear that some people having legal power or corrupt influence in Meath are getting, or have got, a presentment for a road to run right through the Temple of Grange !

We do not know their names, nor, if the design be at once given up, as in deference to public opinion it must finally be, shall we take the trouble to find them out. But if they persist in this brutal outrage against so precious a landmark of Irish history and civilisation, then we frankly say if the law will not reach them public opinion shall, and they shall bitterly repent the desecration.



[Interior view of Newgrange Burial Chamber

These men who design, and those who consent to act, may be Liberals or Tories, Protestants or Catholics, but beyond a doubt they are tasteless blockheads—poor devils without reverence or education—men, who, as Wordsworth says :

“ Would peep and botanise
Upon their mothers' graves ”.



Entrance stone to Newgrange Burial Chamber

MONASTERBOICE

HOME OF IRELAND'S CROSSES

The story of Monasterboice dates back to the sixth century, but like so many other settlements of that period, the facts available regarding its construction and inhabitants are few. It is known, however, that the monastery was founded by an ecclesiastic named Buite, a descendant of one of the chieftains of Munster.

He lived until the year 520 A.D. so it is considered more than likely that he, at some stage of his youth, came into direct contact with St. Patrick. He travelled extensively through Italy, Germany and England before beginning work on the Monasterboice monastery on his return to Ireland.

In the course of his travels throughout Ireland Buite is said to have cured many people, sometimes in the strangest ways. Once, a blind man, carrying a cripple, pleaded with Buite to cure them of their infirmities and were told to anoint themselves in the water through which his carriage had passed. They did so and were cured.

On another occasion while hastening to save the life of a captive of the High King he found the river Boyne, which he had to cross, swollen in flood. But when he struck the water with his staff a passage was cleared for him and, like another Moses, he crossed safely.

To his dismay he found the prisoner had already been beheaded. But, Buite proceeded to replace the head and restore the man to life. Legend has it that thereafter the restored man spent the remainder of his days tending the monastic garden at Monasterboice.

Many other stories are told of his works which resulted in cures for people and animals. But, perhaps the strangest of all

was the manner in which Buite is reputed to have died. Walking one day in the monastery cemetery he was filled with a desire for death and he is said to have ascended a ladder provided by angels.

The other monks watched in amazement, but Buite returned with a disc of glass in front of his face which enabled him to see without being seen. He remained with his monks for several more months and before he died foretold of the coming of St. Colmcille, who it is thought, was born on the same day.

FOUNDED IN THE SIXTH CENTURY

Although the monastic building had been undertaken in the sixth century many decades passed before it was completed. The ruins visible today include a round tower, a sundial, three sculptured High Crosses and two Churches. It is possible that there were other buildings but there is no evidence to support such a theory.

Although Buite was dead, other monks carried on the work he had undertaken. The monastery, however, seems to have had little significance as a place of student learning. Life was not easy for the monks for, apart from their monastic rule of life, they were subjected to constant attacks by Danes and Norsemen which resulted in the community livestock and other valuables being stolen.

In the mid-ninth century, Danes established a coastal settlement at Annagassen, some eight miles from the monastery. At first this seemed to present another threat to Monasterboice, but there was nothing to fear for the Danes were Christians and spared Monasterboice, although they did plunder other monastic establishments.

An entry in the Irish Annals tells a strange, but not surprising story. It says that in 969 A.D. "Domhnall, the High King of Ireland, plundered Monasterboice, against the Foreigners, and burned three hundred of them in one house." This seems to be

explained by the fact that most of the monks at that time were Danes.

It was quite a common event for Irishmen to plunder monasteries occupied by Foreigners in retaliation for similar attacks by their opponents. A period of more than thirty years elapsed before the monastery was again occupied about the year 1005 A.D.

During the period between the 9th and 11th centuries Ireland suffered constant attacks by Scandinavian plunderers who raided not only farm dwellings but also monasteries, stealing anything of value which they could find in addition to terrorising the inhabitants.



A General View of Monasterboice

To overcome this menace the monks in various parts of the country decided to protect themselves by building towers of refuge where they could live during the barbaric raids. These structures served many other purposes and were especially useful as watch towers by providing a clear view of the surrounding countryside.

The monks at Monasterboice had their own watch tower which, like many others throughout the countryside, was round in design. By using this pattern they had many advantages and did not require specially cut corner stones, a factor which meant a great saving in expenditure.

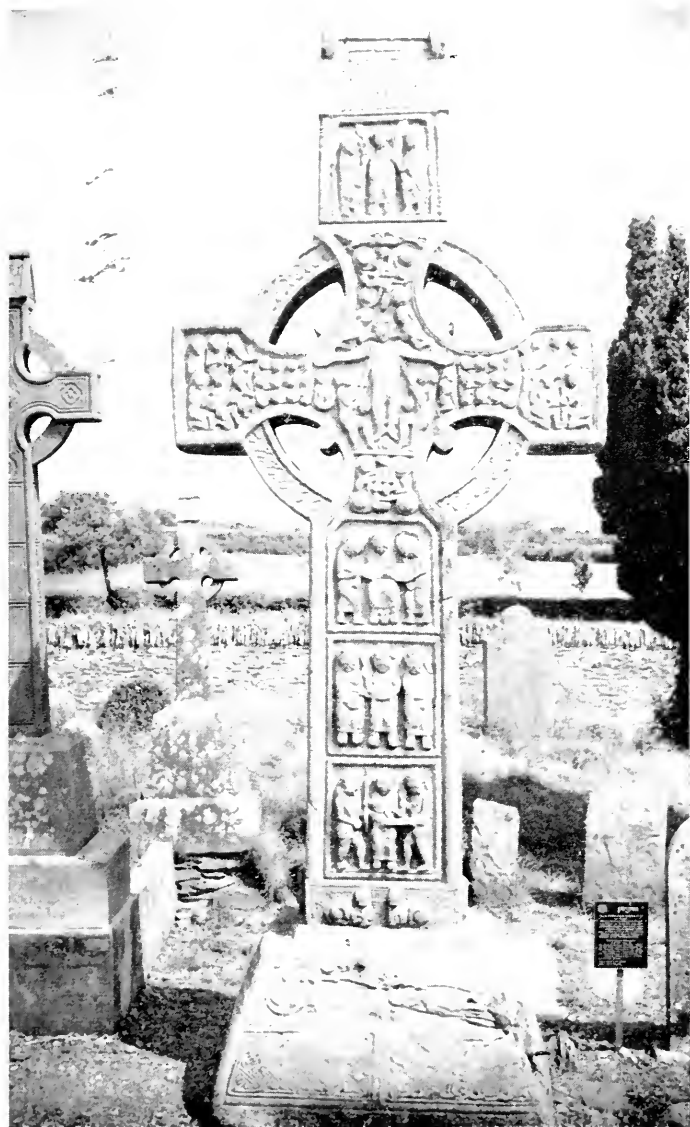
In addition, the raiders could not demolish the towers as they were unable to remove stones from the base. The entrance door to the tower several feet above ground level and entrance was gained by the use of a ladder which was drawn up into the tower.

ONE THOUSAND YEARS OLD

So, it became a common event for the monks to gather together their valuables and retire into the tower when bands of raiders were sighted. The period of isolation in the tower varied, depending on whether the raiders decided to remain hours or days. Then, when danger had passed, the monks returned to their normal way of life.

Today, a steel ladder provides access to the Monasterboice tower which is divided into five stories, separated by wooden floors. In 1871, the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association renewed these floors and the ladders connecting them. A sliding trapdoor provides access to the roof which has been reconstructed in concrete.

It was at this level that the monks are thought to have sounded their hand bells. The ringing windows, common to other towers throughout the country, comprised of long upright slots



Muiredach's Cross, West face

in the tower wall. But with the loss of the tower's conical roof these windows were demolished.

Each floor of the tower has one window of its own but all face in different directions, so it was possible to observe the countryside and at the same time have only one, or two, windows at the most, visible from outside the tower. Thus the defenders could throw missiles from different heights during a siege.

The main cause for anxiety was the danger of fire. In the event of the tower's timber flooring being set alight by fire-tipped arrows, the strong draught caused by the tower's general design, would give the occupants little chance of surviving.

Yet, despite such threats, the Monasterboice tower has remained standing for almost one thousand years—a lasting tribute to its builders. With the exception of the tower on Scattery Island, it stands supreme, although, like the tower of Pisa, it is slightly off the perpendicular.

NORTH AND SOUTH CHURCHES

The Monasterboice Churchyard contains the remains of two oratories, known as the North Church and the South Church. The former, which measures 39 ft. 8 ins. by 18 ft. 9 ins., dates from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century.

This date would seem to indicate that it had no real connection with the Monastic settlement, but was probably a Parish Church built on the site after the Monastery had ceased to function. It has two doorways and four windows which were fitted with wooden shutters for use in bad weather.

There are signs which indicate that this Church was fitted with a gallery at the west end; an offset is to be seen in the west wall above the doorway. Inside the Church a granite stone, believed to have been the shaft of the Baptismal Font, still remains.

Although the floor was originally level throughout there is now a depression of 2 ft. towards the western end. This, it is thought, was caused by the large number of interments in the surrounding cemetery.

The South Church is of earlier construction than the North Church and measures 32 ft. by 13 ft. 6 ins., and was entered by a circular arched doorway, comparatively low due to the fact that this Church had a remarkably low roof. The lack of space to allow a detailed examination by means of excavation makes it impossible to form a clear picture of this oratory.

One of its unusual features lies in the fact that it has two side entrances. It seems to have undergone some alterations by the building of a new gable wall at the west end and it appears to have been supported in places by the addition of buttresses. The passage of time has reduced the eastern wall to ruins and no attempt appears to have been made to restore it.

In the centre of this oratory can be seen a curious type of bowl which was common to many Churches of the period and were known as 'bullauns'. It is thought to have served many purposes including that of a holy water font. As in the case of the North Church the floor level of this oratory has subsided by a depth of about 2 feet.

THE WEST CROSS

Of the many high crosses to be found throughout Ireland the two at Monasterboice are of great interest and have won the praise of antiquaries of many lands. Their panels are decorated with Biblical and other religious scenes that have withstood the weather conditions of the centuries.

The West, or Tall Cross shows the most signs of wear. It is the taller of the two crosses and stands close by the round tower. The shaft is just 20 ft. high and comprises three separate stones; a bottom shaft of 11 ft. with a top stone measuring



Muiredach's Cross, East face.

2 ft. 3 ins. which is surmounted by the circle.

The west face, closest to the tower, looking from the base upwards depicts the Resurrection, Baptism and Crucifixion of Christ. In the centre of the wheel the figure is shown tied to the Cross with ropes, while the left arm shows Christ being blindfolded and mocked. The right arm shows Judas' kiss of betrayal.

On the east face David is shown killing the lion. Above this Abraham is seen sacrificing Isaac. Next comes the panel depicting the worship of the Golden Calf and then David with the head of Goliath above which Goliath is again depicted, this time preparing to fight the armies of Israel. The centre panel shows the Ascension.

MUIREDACH'S CROSS

Smaller in size, but much clearer and easier to understand is the 14 ft. 7 ins. high Muiredach's Cross. It is so called because of the inscription at the base which means "A prayer for Muiredach by whom this cross was made." It is different from the West cross in several respects and its shaft consists of only one stone.

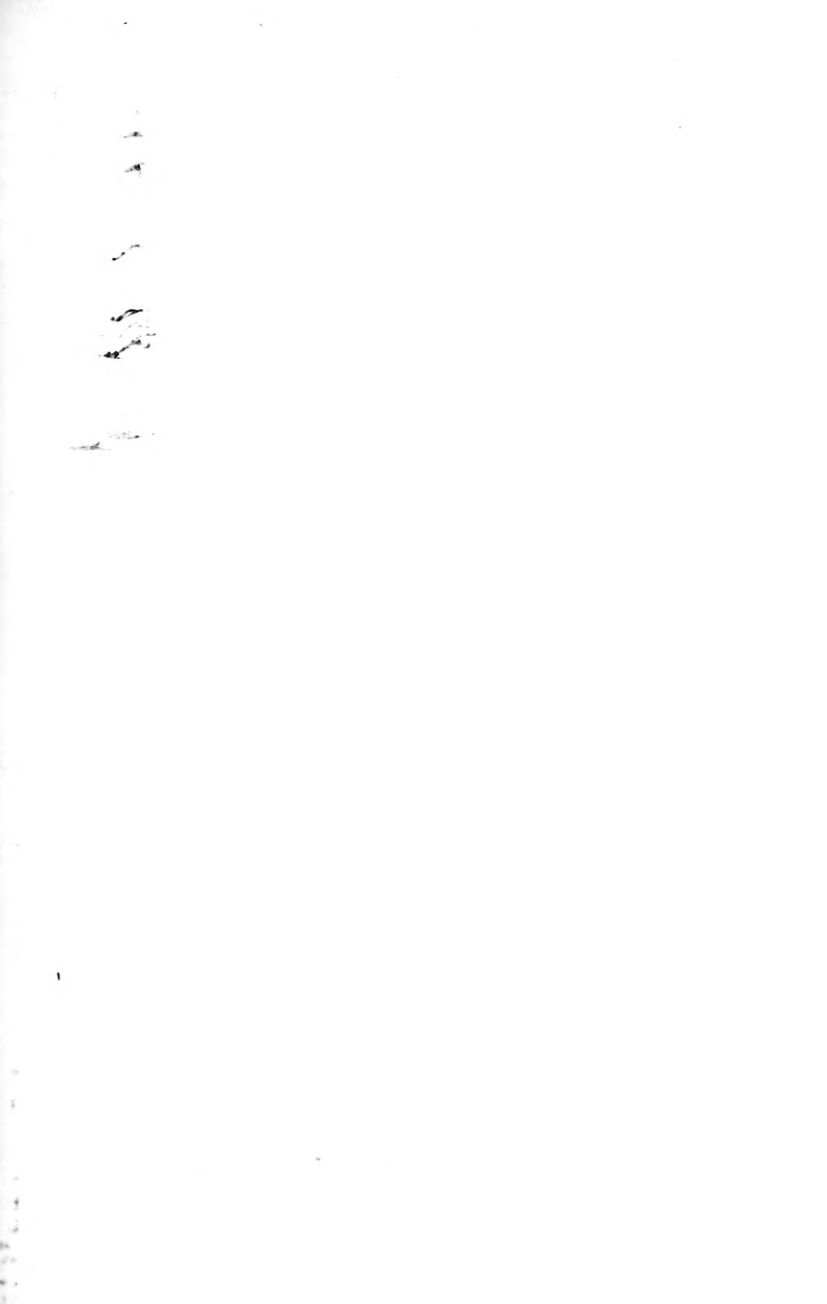
There are conflicting opinions as to the story told by the scenes depicted on this cross. The east side is thought to be significant and forms the first part of a story which is continued on the west face. Briefly, the panels represent the worldly victory by the Danes over the Irish.

This story continues on the reverse or west side of the cross, and is thought to signify the triumph of Christianity over paganism. The episodes are believed to represent the conversion of Danes or Norsemen at the Annagassan settlement some miles from the monastery.

In the bottom panel stands an Abbot with tonsured head and holding a staff, being attacked by two bearded Danish soldiers

carrying swords. This was probably the first meeting of the Abbot and the Danes. Above it the Danes have left aside their swords and are dressed as monks, holding books, as though being instructed by the Abbot.

The next scene shows the centre figure giving a scroll to the figure on the left and a book bearing the word *Soscel*, Gospel, to the other figure as if sending them on a journey. The story, significantly enough, leads to the final subject—the Crucifixion.



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The image shows the front cover and spine of a book. The cover is decorated with a dark, intricate marbled pattern. The spine is a solid, dark color with a fine, woven texture. A small, white, rectangular label with a decorative, scalloped edge is attached to the spine. The label contains the text 'Univers', 'Sout', and 'Lib' on three separate lines, which are partially cut off on the right side of the image.

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Sout
Lib